A fragrant comeback

GET YOUR CLIENTS TO STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES, AND THE JASMINE, LILACS, MINT, VIBURNUMS AND MORE.

By Janet Aird

We're used to smelling roses, jasmine and mint in gardens, but chocolate? Licorice? Cinnamon? There are a surprising number of fragrances and fragrant plants, and homeowners are beginning to rediscover them.

"These days fragrance is coming back," says Marita Tewes Tyrolt, horticultural director at the University of Utah's Red Butte Garden, which has a fragrance garden of about half an acre. It has about five types of fragrant trees, 30 shrubs and sub-shrubs, including herbs, and close to 40 perennials. They add annuals for seasonal displays, usually about five in spring/early summer and 10 to 12 in summer/fall.

There are two types of fragrant plants, she says. Some, like lilacs, roses and freesias produce essential oils on their petals to lure pollinators. They're called "free" because they give their scent freely. The ones that attract daytime pollinators, such as butterflies, hummingbirds and bees, tend to be less fragrant than the plants that attract nighttime ones, like moths and bats.

Other plants, such as marigolds and herbs, produce essential oils on their leaves, stems, seeds or bark, often to repel leaf-eating predators. They're called "fast," because they release their fragrances when the oils are rubbed, bruised or crushed.

"Each plant produces a constant amount of essential oil," says Fritz Kollmann, a horticulturalist and crew leader at the fragrance garden, but the intensity of the fragrance can vary according to the time of day, humidity and heat. Flowers that open in the evening tend to have the strongest fra-
The University of Utah's Red Butte Garden has a fragrance garden of about half an acre.

One of Kollmann's favorites, the mimosa tree (Albizia julibrissin 'Rosea') "creates an incredible effect," he says. "They bloom for two and a half months. The flowers tickle your nose."

Other trees with fragrant flowers include the black locust (Robinia pseudoacacia), sweet tea olive (Osmanthus fragrans) and magnolias. Fragrant shrubs include witchhazel (Hamamelis), lilacs (Syringa), two different shrubs called mock orange (Philadelphus and Pittosporum), roses and viburnums.

"We have a heavy focus on perennials," Tewes Tyroll says. Some of the most fragrant are peonies, lilac of the valley, sweet William and carnations (both Dianthus), hostas, heliotrope and the vine, clematis. Some fragrant annuals are hys-sopep (Agastache), sweet alyssum (Lobularia maritima), pansies and violets (both Viola), and stocks (Matthiola), and the vines, nasturtium (Tropaeolum), sweet pea (Lathyrus odoratus) and corkscrew vine (Vigna caracalla). Bulbs with fragrant flowers include irises, hyacinths and freesias.

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Other evening-fragrant perennials include orchids (Cestrum nocturnum), Oriental lilies (Lilium), fragrant columbine (Aquilegia fragrans) and four-o’clocks (Mirabilis jalapa). Annuals include flowering tobacco (Nicotiana) and night-scented stocks (Matthiola), and shrubs, daphne, gardenias, night-blooming jessamine (Cestrum nocturnum) and frangipani (Plumaria). Tuberose (Polianthes tuberosa) is a fragrant bulb.

Wisteria vines are a major element of the fragrance garden, Kollmann says. Other evening-fragrant vines include honeysuckles (Lonicera), jasmine, star jasmine (Trachelospermum Jasminoides) and moonflower vine (Ipomoea alba).

**Fragrant foliage, bark, stems and buds**

“Fragrance from blooms can be so fleeting,” Tewes Tyrolt says. Using plants with scented foliage is a good way to extend the season.

Most people think of herbs when they think of fragrant foliage. They include anise (Pimpella anisum), which smells like licorice, basil, bee balm/bergamot/horse mint (all Monarda fistulosa) lavender, lemon verbena, lemon balm, rosemary, sweet woodruff, tarragon, wormwood and yarrow.

Many other plants have fragrant foliage as well, such as French marigolds (Tagetes patula) and trees, including pines, junipers, cedars, California bay/Oregon myrtle (both Umbellularia Californica), eucalyptus, fragrant sumac (Rhus aromatica), black walnut (Juglans nigra) and bay Laurel (Laurus nobilis).

Other parts of plants can be fragrant, too. “You can get a lemony scent by scratching the bark of the sassafras tree,” Tewes Tyrolt says. “And a lot of spices, for example, cloves, are from dried flower buds.”

The camphor tree (Cinnamomum camphora) has fragrant bark. A shrub called Carolina allspice, sweet shrub and spiecebush (Calycanthus floridus) has fragrant flowers, leaves, stems and bark. Northern spice bush (Lindera benzoin) has fragrant leaves, stems and fruit. And the myrtle (Myrtus communis) has fragrant flowers, foliage and bark.

**Where to plant**

Plants are more fragrant when their growing conditions suit them, but many, including the mints, sweet woodruff, honeysuckle, black locust and the most fragrant heliotrope, are weedy. Choose plants that suit the conditions in your area but won’t become invasive.

Most fragrant plants prefer sun to partial shade. For areas with denser shade, plant lily of the valley, hostas, some gardenias, orchids, lilies and jasmines. Group plants with similar needs for water together, if possible. In the fragrance garden, the more water-needy ones, especially the annuals, grow inside the beds, bordered by the more water-thrifty ones, such as herbs, Kollmann says.

Ask clients to check the fragrances first. Different people prefer different scents, and some can find the fragrance of one overpowering while others may find it more delicate, Tewes Tyrolt warns.

Grow fragrant plants outside windows, in window boxes, on patios and next to seating areas. Put evening-fragrant plants near places people spend their evenings, or outside bedroom windows, and plants whose foliage has to be crushed or brushed for fragrance near walkways. If they’re mat-like, such as creeping thyme, German chamomile (Matricula Recutita or Chamomilla Recutita) and the apple-scented Roman chamomile (Chamaemelemum nobilis), plant them between pavers.

Use containers for plants that need to be brought inside in the winter and for containing invasive plants. Keep fragrances from blowing away by putting plants under arbors or along fences, walls and hedges. Plant fragrant evergreens for windbreaks. Take advantage of reflected heat by planting against walls or on patios.

Planting for fragrance makes garden planning more exciting, Tewes Tyrolt says. “It forces us to come up with more unique solutions.”

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